Going Native; Review of: The Barbarians Speak. How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe by P. S. Wells

Going Native

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The Classical Review / Volume 51 / Issue 01 / March 2001, pp 127 - 128
DOI: 10.1093/cr/51.1.127, Published online: 25 April 2006

Overall, the book is a disappointment. Too much of it simply sums up existing debates about, *inter alia*, the status of epigraphy as public writing, the state of the ancient economy, and seating plans in theatres. Moreover, the selective presentation of individual inscriptions as 'case studies' for in-depth examination leaves the reader with no idea of the typicality (or not) of the forms of behaviour under examination.

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GOING NATIVE

P. S. WELLS: *The Barbarians Speak. How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe*. Pp. xii + 335, figs. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Paper, £18.95. ISBN: 0-691-05871-7.

The book is not concerned with the whole of Roman Europe, as the title implies, but focuses on central Europe. Those, however, who are interested in the cultural history of Germany and adjacent areas in the Roman period will not be disappointed. The first section is devoted to the battle of the Teutoburg Forest, recently located at Bramsche-Kalkriese. (Wells rightly disregards the continued doubts about the location.) This battle, which marked the end of large-scale imperial expansion in northern Germany, is taken as an introduction to a much wider study of the interaction of immigrants and natives in the Roman period in central Europe. Rome encountered a very sophisticated culture in Gaul. A masterly summary of *oppida*, ritual sites, and the rich material culture of the Iron Age is followed by the history of the Roman conquest and the resulting mutual influences between native population and immigrants. W. is right in stressing that most of the newcomers were not from the city of Rome, but this has always been known, and scholars use the adjective 'Roman' in the imperial period to describe either a legal status or the culture of a heterogeneous Empire. It is hard to follow him, therefore, when he proposes to describe Samian ware of provincial origin as 'Roman-style' (pp. 127–8). His claim (p. 187) that there is no indication of large-scale abandonment or mass immigration in any of the frontier regions needs to be qualified. There certainly were considerable regional variations in the level of immigration and in the resulting cultural impact. A very high proportion of the population of the area between the 'Limes' and the upper Rhine consisted of immigrants (E. Sauer, *OJA* 15.1 [1996], 79; p. 87 n. 103 with references), notwithstanding that comparatively few came from Italy. Nevertheless, W. is certainly right in stressing that all sections of provincial society exercised influence on each other and that there was no such thing as a one-way process of Romanization.

Many Iron Age traditions continued long after the conquest. As most of the examples are very convincing, there is no need to repeat them here. However, the widely held theory that coin offerings in springs have to be seen as a continuation of prehistoric offerings in watery places, adopted also by W. (pp. 37–8), is incorrect. The deposit of coins in springs and wells was a custom imported from Italy (E. Sauer, *JRA* Suppl. 34 [1999], 52–79). Cultural influences were active both ways. Whether the third-century deposits from wells at Rainau-Buch, comprising a range of objects, most of them made of metal, constitute ritual deposits in native tradition, as W. postulates (pp. 166–7), or non-recovered hoards remains open to debate. The concealment of hoards in a watery place during a period of insecurity would not be without parallels (K. Randsborg, *Hjortspring* [Aarhus, 1995], 110).

Certainly problematic is the claim (p. 170; cf. pp. 196–8) that 'the reproduction of indigenous Late Iron Age practices and objects was a much more pervasive and effectual form of resistance [than armed rebellion, such as the uprising of the Batavians] to the changes brought by the Roman occupation'. The continuation of religious customs or the continued production of traditional types of artefacts certainly represents 'resistance' in the same way that, for example, the reluctance of the elderly today to adopt fashionable clothing or leisure pursuits can be called 'resistance' to new fashions. The term 'resistance' in this context can be used interchangeably with the term 'traditionalism'. If we adopt such a minimalist definition, then the 'resistance' debate is more about words than substance. However, if we define 'resistance' as a conscious expression of serious discontent with Roman rule, then we surely cannot claim with any confidence that the fact that many provincials continued to live in traditional houses, used traditional pottery, and maintained religious practices represents firm evidence for 'resistance'. On the basis of such a hypothesis we could equally argue that groups of immigrants in America, who retained their religion and aspects of their material culture, were politically rebellious, whereas we know that they had chosen to come to gain political freedom. We could only claim that the maintenance of traditions represents certain evidence for political resistance if Rome had actively suppressed such traditions, which was not the case (with rare exceptions such as druidism). It is worth remembering that the Batavian uprising was the last revolt in Roman Europe which one could describe as separatist, a striking contrast to the Spanish, British, French, and Soviet empires. If there was such widespread resistance up to the second century, as W. claims, it would be odd that the threshold to open rebellion was never again crossed. The Roman state had clearly a much greater ability to integrate than recent colonial empires, with which W. frequently draws parallels.

In the concluding section W. impressively demonstrates the degree of mutual influence between Rome and free Germany, pointing out that the creation of powerful new tribal groups in the third century, such as the Alamanni, has to be seen as a result of the interaction between the inhabitants of the Empire and those of free Germany. 'Rome effectively trained its future enemies' (p. 261). We know the consequences.

My disagreement with some of the interpretations should not detract from the fact that W. has produced an admirable study, which testifies to his wide in-depth knowledge of the subject. It is an invaluable up-to-date and factually accurate introduction, which guides students and scholars to important research, much of which is otherwise not accessible to those who do not read German.

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EATING LIKE A ROMAN

MARK GRANT: *Roman Cookery, Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens*. Pp. 191, ills. London: Serif, 1999. Paper, £9.99 ISBN: 1-897959-39-7.

I have always avoided Roman cookery. Not so difficult, you might think; it hardly lurks in the supermarket to ambush the unsuspecting cook. But I do cook regularly from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century recipes, and even produce the occasional sixteenth-century meal. Why stop there? I had always believed the evidence for earlier cooking to be too sketchy, the flavours too foreign, and the ingredients too difficult to